

Dear Chairpersons Bartolomeo and Urban and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to ask for your support of raised bill 6805. This bill would require implementation of a universal annual hearing screening program for children receiving services under the Department of Developmental Services Birth-to-Three program. Connecticut recognizes that hearing screenings are important for hearing loss identification at birth and at grades Kindergarten, 1, 2, 3, 5, and 8, but more must be done to prevent undetected hearing loss before a child reaches school age to avoid issues with mislabeling.

Screening via the Birth to Three program is critical because

- Approximately 1 in 7 or over 14% of school-aged children have hearing loss. (Source: American Academy of Audiology (2011))

- Left undetected, even mild or unilateral hearing loss can result in delayed speech and language acquisition, social-emotional or behavioral problems, and lags in academic achievement. (Source: Yoshinaga-Itano C., Sedey A.L., Coulter B.A., & Mehl A.L. (1998))

- When children are not identified and do not receive early intervention, special education for a child with hearing loss significantly increases costs to schools by an additional \$420,000, and has a lifetime cost of approximately \$1 million per individual. (Source: Johnson, J.L., Mauk, G.W., Takekawa, K.M., Simon, P.R., Sia, C.C.J., & Blackwell, P.M. (1993))

- Over 20% of children in Connecticut who fail the newborn hearing screening will fall through the cracks and be lost to follow up. (Source: CT Department of Public Health (2013))

- Newborn hearing screening does not identify late onset, acquired, or many cases of progressive loss. (Source: Joint Commission on Infant Hearing (2007))

I urge and request that you please support this important legislation that would help detect hearing loss as early as possible. Children who obtain early intervention services have improved language abilities, increased success in academic achievement, increased communication skills and stronger social emotional functioning.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request. Your support of children who have hearing loss is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

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